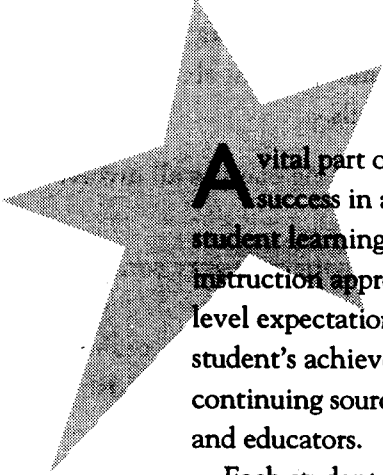


# A Plan for Success



**A** vital part of the process by which each student achieves success in a Challenge school is the development of the student learning plan. The plan coordinates the curriculum and instruction appropriate for each student to meet or exceed grade-level expectations and content standards. Focusing on each student's achievements, needs, and support, the plan provides a continuing source of discussion and reflection for parents, students, and educators.

Each student in a Challenge school has a plan for achieving success. The format of the student learning plan will most likely vary district by district, school by school, and student by student, because districts devise procedures, format, and content that will work best for the staff and families they serve.

Educators are encouraged to use existing procedures and events to implement the student learning plan system developed in their districts.

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## Characteristics and Benefits

Although individual learning plans may vary among districts, schools, and students, they share the following characteristics:

- They are developed for every student in a Challenge district, including those with special needs or conditions.
- They describe the curriculum and instruction planned to respond to the student's learning styles, strengths, and interests, as well as the interventions needed to ensure success.
- They describe each student's achievement with respect to grade-level content and performance standards.

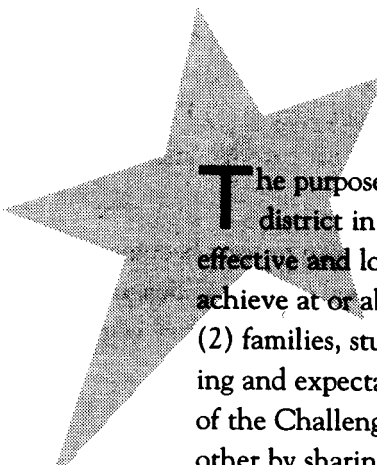
- They focus attention and efforts on each student's successes and achievements.
- They provide opportunities to plan, monitor, and evaluate success for students.
- They provide opportunities to guide the learning of the individual student and to involve, as well as inform, families.
- They are prepared by parents, school staff, and the student together and are reviewed regularly.
- They may address community service, instruction, achievement, and other concerns.
- They reflect the cultural and linguistic background of the students; their unique needs; and concerns about communication, living skills, and social skills.

The proven benefits of student learning plans to all involved are many:

- **Students** are assured of receiving the necessary curriculum, instruction, and support.
- **Teachers** and educational staff are provided a coordinated, shared statement of expectations, agreements, understandings, and support for a student.
- **Parents** and families are kept informed of student achievement, concerns, expectations, and support and are offered opportunities to share their expectations and become partners in the educational program of their children. (The term *parents* includes guardians, foster parents, relatives, and others who have assumed the role of caregivers to the students.)

Student success is at the heart of student learning plan. Increased student success will be its measure.

# Networking and Support Strategies



**T**he purpose of this document is to assist each Challenge district in implementing student learning plans in the most effective and locally responsible manner so that (1) students achieve at or above the high standards set by the district; and (2) families, students, and educators have a common understanding and expectation of what will be taught and learned. One goal of the Challenge program is for Challenge districts to support each other by sharing relevant and useful information with staff and families in the districts.

Some strategies and activities for networking and support are listed below. Representatives of the Challenge districts should review these suggested approaches, determine which their districts should follow, and make a plan for implementation. Challenge district staffs should also identify their roles in the implementation of the student learning plans and determine how to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities chosen.

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## Networking

- **Identification of contact people:** The names and titles of individuals working on student learning plans in each Challenge district will be posted on a World Wide Web site dedicated to the Challenge program. These people will represent a variety of grade levels.

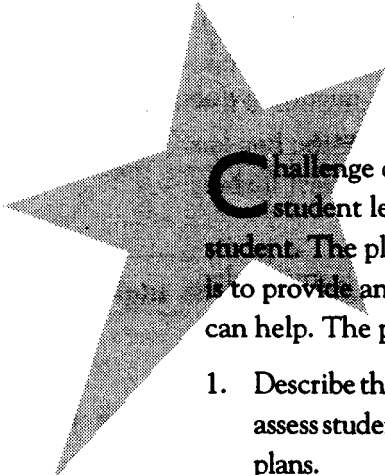
- **Statewide network meetings:** Periodically, representatives of the Challenge districts statewide will meet to explore new strategies and techniques to support each other and to address problems and concerns regarding implementation of the learning plans. Representatives from other elements of the Challenge program will be invited to participate to ensure an integrated approach to implementation of the learning plans.

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## Support and Resources

- **World Wide Web site:** Part of the Challenge site on the World Wide Web will be devoted to student learning plans. Included will be (a) names of contact people in each district; (b) possible formats; (c) effective procedures; (d) readings and resources; (e) plans for different grade levels; (f) FAQs (frequently asked questions); (g) a page for parents; and (h) a page for students.
- **Mentors:** As the student learning plan process becomes more established, mentors will be identified to assist colleagues in districts coming into the Challenge program as they begin to implement student learning plans.

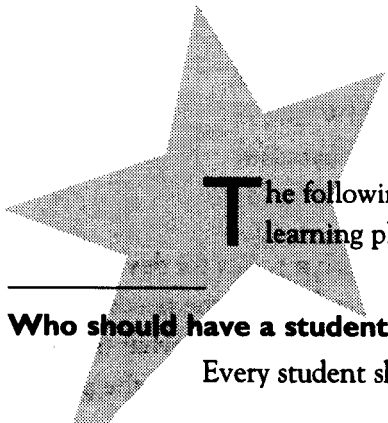
# District Policy on Student Learning Plans



**C**hallenge districts need to establish a policy for developing student learning plans that are tailored to the needs of each student. The plans should clearly inform parents of what the school is to provide and what the student is to learn and how the parent can help. The policy must do the following:

1. Describe the current resources available to teachers to support and assess student learning as part of developing all student learning plans.
2. Express the district's commitment to implement a comprehensive, multiyear, districtwide student learning plan that addresses (a) development of the plan; (b) time lines; (c) training for staff and parents; (d) progress reports to parents; and (e) progress reports to the governing board and the community.
3. Support student achievement in attaining or exceeding grade-level expectations and standards.
4. Suggest the strategies and services available to staff, parents, and students to attain the district plan's performance objectives.
5. Ensure continuity of the student learning plan throughout a student's school years with ongoing opportunities for communication among parents, staff, and students.
6. Take into consideration the cultural and linguistic diversity of parents and students and their unique needs.

# Questions and Answers



**T**he following are questions you might have about student learning plans, followed by answers.

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**Who should have a student learning plan?**

Every student should have a student learning plan.

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**How long is a student learning plan?**

There is no prescribed minimum or maximum length for a student learning plan. The plan should be measured by its usefulness, not its length; it may be as short as one page. Further, instead of being written, the plan may be recorded on videotape or audiotape.

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**Are there any state requirements for the student learning plan?**

There are no requirements or restrictions on the student learning plan.

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**Is there a required format?**

No. Several districts and schools have had success with various formats, and these may be reviewed by teachers and the community as they develop their own formats and processes. Some of these samples will be available as resources provided by the California Department of Education. Others will be shared among the Challenge districts.

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**How are the format and the process for the student learning plan to be developed?**

Educators, students, and parents can collaborate at the school or district level to identify the content of the learning plans and to develop a process for writing them. The California Department of Education will support the Challenge districts as they work to develop successful processes and share them with each other.

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**Will the CDE distribute guidelines for the student learning plans?**

No. Staff of the Challenge districts and the CDE will assist each other by maintaining samples of formats used successfully in different districts and by developing and sharing general guidelines and other resource materials. The CDE and the Challenge districts will also maintain and support interaction among district personnel and others who are involved in developing or implementing student learning plans.

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**What might an effective student learning plan look like?**

There is no one format for an effective student learning plan. The schools that have had success with learning plans suggest that effective plans are simple, involve parents and students, focus on a few items, and address nonacademic concerns, such as health and behavior, when appropriate. What makes a student learning plan effective is what has made successful teachers effective: knowledge of the student, the curriculum, and effective instructional approaches and appropriate assessment measures.

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**Is the student learning plan developed at a meeting?**

This is a decision to be made by the district, the educational staff, and the parents. Some districts have found that mailed communication is useful in combination with face-to-face meetings. Some districts are exploring the use of electronic communication and the Internet to exchange information and planning data between parents and school staff. Phone conferences and phone calls might be used to involve families that cannot attend meetings at the school or that have other constraints on their time and ability to be at school.

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**Who is responsible for coordinating and maintaining the student learning plan?**

Responsibility will vary. Depending on the decisions made in the school and the district, the person coordinating the plan could be the parent or a school staff member. It may be that, as the student matures, the student will take on increasing responsibility for coordinating his or her own plan.

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**Who develops each student's learning plan?**

It is recommended that the student and her or his parents and educators develop the learning plan together. Each district and school will decide on the specific participants for that student.

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**How does the student learning plan reflect student achievement in relation to grade-level expectations, and how does it reflect other assessment information?**

The learning plan should reflect the student's achievement in relation to grade-level content expectations and standards. It may also include issues such as social and interpersonal skills, extracurricular activities, other student activities, and student service learning. Not all students will have the same emphasis in all areas of the curriculum.

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**May a learning plan address nonacademic needs and expectations that may affect a student's success?**

Yes. The learning plan's boundaries are defined by the educators, the parents, and the students involved. Districts and schools may wish to identify the components basic to all learning plans and then stipulate additional components for certain students.

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**Is a learning plan written for only those students who are not achieving?**

The learning plan is for every student. It is not a "deficit document" that focuses only on areas of concern. Some schools have found that the learning plan can be a way to set "stretch goals" for the student. Learning plans also help school staffs in developing curriculum and instructional strategies.



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**Should the learning plan address the developmental needs of the student?**

Yes. The student learning plan should be appropriate to the student's age.

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**Must a teacher monitor the student's progress on a daily or weekly basis?**

The district or school, the teacher, the parents, and the student will determine how often the progress of a student will be assessed and how the effectiveness of the instructional program will be evaluated.

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**How often will the student learning plan need to be updated or developed?**

District and school staffs, parents, and students will determine timelines for updating the plans. Since the student learning plan addresses grade-level standards, the plan will probably need to be updated at least annually. Different content areas may require a different schedule. All areas of the plan do not need to be updated at the same time.

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**How will we know when to update a student learning plan?**

Currently, parents and educators may decide on the necessity to review a student's achievement and progress; the same applies to reviewing the learning plan. The determining factor should be the student's achievement and results.

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**Is the student learning plan a confidential document?**

Yes, as is any document that contains personal information about a student.

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**Will the learning plan be available for review by parents and the student?**

Yes. The plan should be made accessible to those legitimately involved in the student's learning, just as report cards or progress reports are now made available.

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**How does the student learning plan tie in with the parent involvement plan or compact?**

The relationship between the student learning plan and the parent involvement plan will need to be defined at the district. Many people see the two plans as intertwined, even to the extent that they be combined in one planning document.

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**Do parents and educators need training in developing student learning plans?**

Yes, many will find training helpful. Many parents may need no more than an introduction to the student learning plan. Others may need to have information about learning expectations and about grade-level and content performance standards. They may need assistance in supporting student learning at home and in thinking about what they want their children to do in the future. Educators may need practice and assistance in including parents in the planning process more effectively and in capturing the valuable insights and information parents have about student learning and needs. Others may need assistance in interpreting assessment data and communicating those results to families in an effective manner. Appropriate training should be part of each Challenge district's initial plan, which is reviewed and updated periodically as people and needs change.

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**What is the relationship between the student learning plan and required plans and programs, such as the individualized education program (IEP) for students in special education?**

Unlike the IEP, the student learning plan is not a prescribed document; nor does it have the same due-process protections. Many programs, such as child development, provide learning plans now. These plans and programs will need to be coordinated with the Challenge schools' student learning plans so that there are no conflicting requirements or expectations.

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**Are student learning plans actually being used successfully?**

Yes. Districts and schools in California and in other states report success for teachers, parents, and students as they use the student learning plan process. Staffs of the Challenge districts and the

CDE will assist each other by sharing strategies and approaches used successfully in different districts and by developing and sharing general guidelines and other resource materials. The CDE and the Challenge districts will also maintain and support interaction among district personnel and others who are involved in developing or implementing learning plans.

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**Will a student learning plan transfer from one school or class to another?**

When a student moves from one school or grade to another, the learning plan(s) developed for that student should accompany him or her. However, the new educators, the parents, and the teachers probably will want to review and update the learning plan or revise the previous plan to reflect the student's new opportunities.

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**How will a learning plan follow the student who moves to a new district?**

It is suggested that the learning plan be forwarded with the student's records.

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**Will developing and implementing the plan require additional time of the teacher?**

It may. Many educators have found that the student learning plans can be developed and shared during already-scheduled events, such as "back-to-school" meetings and parent-teacher conference times. Some middle schools report that student-led parent-teacher conferences are successful. Others have found that they can reschedule distribution of report cards or schedule parent conferences. These adaptations and solutions have come from small schools and large schools, schools in rural areas and schools in large cities. Successful implementation of learning plans has used existing time and structures in new ways. Districts may make provisions for learning plan development in their curriculum processes.

**How will teachers schedule the time to prepare the student learning plans?**

Each district and school will need to explore a variety of options, depending on its setting and situation.

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**Are learning plans useful for students at all levels of schools and in all settings?**

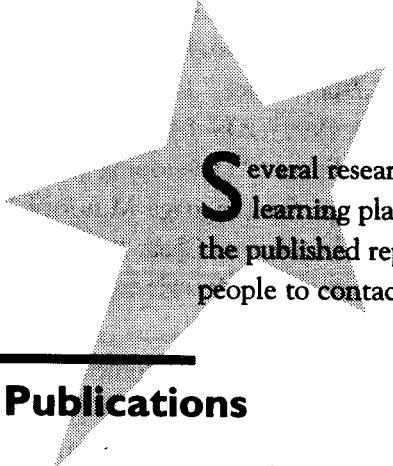
Yes. Students in regular classrooms, class-size reduction classrooms, migrant programs, preschool programs, work experience programs, special education programs, and other situations will all benefit from learning plans. The plans can assist in articulation and transition among the various settings and grade levels.

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**What can the CDE do for the staff and parents in the Challenge districts?**

The CDE staff will work to support everyone involved in the Challenge districts to ensure students' success. The staff will provide technical assistance and support, as needed, and will provide resource documents, sample learning plans, and names of contact people who can help schools make learning plans work.

# Resources



**S**everal research projects have shown the positive effects of learning plans on students' success. The following list cites the published reports for 15 of these studies. On page 14 is a list of people to contact for information and support.

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## Publications

1. Abadir, Laila, and others. *Effects of Mastery Learning Strategies on Community College Mathematics Student Achievement and Success Rate*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, Georgia, April 12–16, 1993, 29 pages.
2. *Adult Basic Education Learning Center 310 Project Evaluation Report, July 1979–June 1980*. Jefferson City: Missouri State Department of Corrections, 1980, 40 pages.
3. Bergman, Janet L. "Sail—A Way to Success and Independence for Low-Achieving Readers," *Reading Teacher*, Vol. 45 (April, 1992), 598–602. Special Issue: *Exemplary Practices in Literacy Development and Instruction*.
4. Clean, Ruth W. "A Two-Tiered Staff Development Model for Continuing Education Teachers," *Community Services Catalyst*, Vol. 16 (Spring, 1986), 4–7.
5. *A Demonstration Model of the National Institute of Education's Experienced-Based Career Education Program, Inter Report*, Vol. I. Lexington, Ky.: Fayette County Public Schools, 1977, 310 pages.
6. Driscoll, Amy, and others. *Portland State University's Cooperative Professional Educational Program: An Alternative Program Response to Reform*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, New Orleans, Louisiana, February 17–20, 1988, 24 pages.

7. *Focus on the Workplace: An Alternative High School Collaborative Project to Reclaim Recent School Dropouts*. Waynesburg, Penn.: Community Action Southwest, July 1994, 94 pages.
8. *Integration of Academic and Vocational Technical Education*: Baltimore, Md.: Special Issue: Maryland State Advisory Council on Vocational Technical Education. *Vocational Technical News*, September, 1989, 8 pages.
9. Johnson, David W., and others. "Impact of Cooperative and Individualistic Learning on High-Ability Students' Achievement, Self-Esteem, and Social Acceptance," *Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 133 (December, 1993), 839-844.
10. Langdon, Henriette, and Dennis Parker. "Developing a Bilingual Individual Education Plan for Language-Minority Students." *Special Education and the Bilingual Child*, 1982, 7 pages. Proceedings of a conference held in Pasadena, California, December 3, 1981.
11. Lawlor, Mar C., and Elizabeth A. Cada. *The UIC Therapeutic Partnership Project: Final Report*. Chicago: University of Illinois at Chicago, Department of Occupational Therapy, April, 1994, 184 pages.
12. Learmonth, Anne. *Creating a Learning Environment in the Workplace: A Manual For Managers, Trainers, Human Resources Personnel, Union Official and Workers*. National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Leabrook, Australia, 1993, 98 pages.
13. Paulson, Sharon E. "Relations of Parenting Style and Parental Involvement with Ninth Grade Students' Achievement." *Journal of Early Adolescence*, Vol. 14 (May, 1994) 250-267. Special Issue: *Middle Grades Schooling and Early Adolescent Development*, Part I.
14. Silverman, Gene, and others. *Long Island Workplace Literacy Program: Final Performance Report and Final Evaluation Report*. Westbury, N.Y.: Nassau County Board of Cooperative Educational Services, March 1995, 91 pages.
15. *Skills Today for Tomorrow: A Workplace Literacy Consortium for the Printing Industry, March 1991-November 1992, Final Report*. Catonsville, Md.: Catonsville Community College, February, 1993, 225 pages.